

# **Playing Paleontologist**

## **A WebQuest for History of Biological Diversity**

### **Introduction**

Paleontologists study the history of life on Earth by studying the fossil records. Movies and books portray paleontology largely as the study of dinosaurs, but in reality paleontologists study the fossils of many kinds of organisms. Sometimes people think that paleontologists have learned all they ever will about Earth's past, but paleontologists regularly make new discoveries. In this WebQuest, you will choose a real-life paleontologist and research his or her work.

### **Task**

The Paleontological Society wants to educate high-school students about paleontologists working in the field today and the subjects they are studying. The society has decided that hiring actors to portray paleontologists is a good way to engage students' attention. The society has hired you to portray a real-life paleontologist. Your task is to research the paleontologist and his or her work and then give a monologue in the persona of the paleontologist in front of a high school class.

### **Process**

Use the resources listed in the Resources section to begin your research. The Web sites listed are good starting points, but further Internet research will be necessary. Record your answers to the following questions.

1. What are some careers within the field of paleontology?
2. Choose a paleontologist and describe where he or she works.
3. What is your chosen paleontologist researching?
4. What technology does your chosen paleontologist use in his or her work?
5. What has been your chosen paleontologist's most important contribution to science?

### **Portrayal/Monologue**

Once you have completed your research, prepare yourself to play the paleontologist you have chosen in a three-minute monologue. Dressed as your chosen paleontologist, you will explain your past, present, and future work in the field. Following your monologue, your classmates will have a few minutes to ask you questions about your work. Answer them in character.

### **Resources**

[National Geographic](#)  
[Paleontological Research Institution](#)  
[The Paleontological Society](#)  
[The Paleontological Association](#)  
[Society of Vertebrate Paleontology](#)  
[University of California Museum of Paleontology](#)

**Evaluation**

Read this rubric to see how you will be scored on this activity.

Criteria					Points
	0	5	10	15	
<b>Task</b>	The task was not completed.	It appears that some effort was made to complete the task, but major ideas are missing.	The task was completed but some information was incorrect.	The task was completed with great attention to detail.	
<b>Process</b>	The process was not followed.	The process was followed, but not all of the questions were answered.	The process was followed, but some answers were incorrect.	It was clear that much research went into the project.	
<b>Role Play</b>	The portrayal of the paleontologist was poorly done, and much incorrect information was given.	The portrayal of the paleontologist was passable, and some information given was correct.	The portrayal of the paleontologist was interesting and fun, most information given was correct, and most audience questions were answered correctly.	The portrayal of the paleontologist was done in a highly creative manner, all information given was correct, and all audience questions were answered correctly.	
<b>Total Score</b>					